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100805Z Jan 02

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 000134

SIPDIS

STATE PASS USDA FOR HEGWOOD
USDA FOR FAS/OA/CHAMBLISS AND SLUTSKY;
COTS/BLUM;ITP/SHEIKH AND MACKE;
FAA/NE/WILSON;
DOS/EB/TPP/ATT; EUR/ERA; E-ASHUB; EB-GADSDEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [EU](#) [ETRD](#) [EU](#) [IT](#) [ICSCA](#) [ITEAGR](#) [ICSCA](#)

SUBJECT: REACTION TO DECEMBER 28 DECREE TO
SURVEY GMO-FREE SUPPLIES OF SOY AND CORN SEED
FOR PLANTING; PM OFFICE MADE AWARE OF U.S.

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CONCERNS.

SENSITIVE

REFS. ROME 42 AND ROME 68

1. SUMMARY. CONFAGRICOLTURA, ONE OF ITALY'S
LEADING FARMER ORGANIZATIONS, TOLD AG
MINCOUNSELOR THAT IT HAS A COMMITMENT FROM
AGMINISTER ALEMANNI TO INTRODUCE A TOLERANCE
OF 0.3-0.5 PERCENT FOR ADVENTITIOUS PRESENCE
IN CORN AND SOYBEAN SEEDS FOR PLANTING SHOULD
THE ITALIAN SEED CERTIFICATION ASSOCIATION
(ENSE) CONCLUDE THERE ARE INADEQUATE SUPPLIES
OF GM-FREE CONVENTIONAL CORN AND SOYBEAN
SEEDS AVAILABLE TO MEET ITALIAN NEEDS.
CONFAGRICOLTURA CAUTIONED THAT RIVAL FARM
ORGANIZATION, COLDIRETTI, IS STRONGLY AGAINST
ANY TOLERANCE LEVEL FOR ADVENTITIOUS PRESENCE
AND WAS SEEKING TO CONVINCE ALEMANNI THAT
ADEQUATE SUPPLIES OF GMO-FREE CONVENTIONAL
SEEDS EXIST. CONFAGRICOLTURA BELIEVES THE
PROSPECTS FOR ALEMANNI IMPLEMENTING A
TOLERANCE OF 0.3-0.5 PERCENT ARE PRETTY GOOD,
PROVIDED THAT THE MAJOR SEED SUPPLYING
COMPANIES (I.E. PIONEER, MONSANTO, AND
SYNGENTA) REMAIN UNIFIED AND REAFFIRM THAT
THEY CANNOT GUARANTEE ZERO ADVENTITIOUS
PRESENCE IN THEIR CONVENTIONAL SEEDS.
CONFAGRICOLTURA ALSO PUBLISHED A PRESS
RELEASE TODAY STATING ITS OPPOSITION TO ANY
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LOWERING SEED QUALITY STANDARDS. IN A
SEPARATE MEETING, CDA POPE SHARED U.S.
CONCERNS WITH PM DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR
CASTELLENETTA. END SUMMARY.

MEETING WITH CONFAGRICOLTURA

2. AGMIN COUNSELOR, AG ATTACHE MURPHY, AND
SENIOR AGRICULTURAL SPECIALIST MET JAN.9 WITH
THE PRESIDENT AND SENIOR LEADERS OF
CONFAGRICOLTURA, ONE OF THE THREE MAJOR
ITALIAN FARMERS ORGANIZATIONS. AGMIN
COUNSELOR LEARNED THAT ITALIAN MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE GIANNI ALEMANNI CONSULTED WITH
ALL THREE ORGANIZATIONS, CONFAGRICOLTURA,
COLDIRETTI, AND CONFEDERAZIONE ITALIANA
AGRICOLTORI, BEFORE ISSUING THE DECEMBER 28,
2001 DECREE (SEE REFTELS). ACCORDING TO
CONFAGRICOLTURA, ALEMANNI WAS PREPARED AT
THAT TIME TO IMPLEMENT A TOLERANCE FOR
ADVENTITIOUS PRESENCE OF 0.3-0.5 PERCENT FOR
CORN AND SOYBEAN SEEDS. HOWEVER, COLDIRETTI,
THE LARGEST OF ITALY'S THREE FARMER
ORGANIZATIONS, EXPRESSED VEHEMENT OPPOSITION,
FORCING ALEMANNI TO TAKE A MORE CIRCUITOUS
TACK IN ORDER TO GARNER SUFFICIENT POLITICAL
COVER. ALEMANNI THUS AGREED WITH THE THREE
FARM LEADERS FOR THE MINAG'S SEED AGENCY,
ENSE, TO DETERMINE WHETHER THERE ARE
SUFFICIENT SUPPLIES OF CONVENTIONAL SEEDS
AVAILABLE WITH ZERO ADVENTITIOUS PRESENCE.
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3. THE DEC. 28 DECREE SURPRISED
CONFAGRICOLTURA IN THAT THEIR DISCUSSION WITH
ALEMANNI DID NOT INCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF
LOWER STANDARDS FOR GERMINATION RATES. THE

PUBLISHED VERSION ADDS THE CLAUSE RELAXING STANDARDS, A LIKELY CONCESSION TO COLDIRETTI AND OTHERS, BUT CONFAGRICOLTURA DISCOUNTS THIS AS A LIKELY SCENARIO.

14. CONFAGRICOLTURA WAS RELATIVELY CONFIDENT THAT ALEMANNI WOULD IMPLEMENT A TOLERANCE FOR ADVENTITIOUS PRESENCE WITH ONE CAVEAT-- THE MAJOR SEED SUPPLIERS MUST REMAIN UNITED AND REAFFIRM THEY CANNOT GUARANTEE ZERO PRESENCE FOR GMOS IN THEIR CONVENTIONAL SEEDS. SHOULD ENSE CONCLUDE THAT SUFFICIENT SUPPLIES OF GMO-FREE CONVENTIONAL SEED EXIST, COLDIRETTI IS LIKELY TO WIN THE DAY. CONFAGRICOLTURA SOUGHT ASSURANCES THAT PIONEER AND THE OTHER SUPPLIERS WOULD MAKE CLEAR THEIR INABILITY TO GUARANTEE ZERO ADVENTITIOUS PRESENCE. (FYI, EMBASSY HAS SHARED CONFAGRICOLTURA'S CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATION WITH PIONEER AND OTHER SUPPLIERS.) CONFAGRICOLTURA ACKNOWLEDGED THAT

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ACTION EUR-00

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| INFO | LOG-00 | AID-00 | CEA-01 | CIAE-00 | COME-00 | CTME-00 | DODE-00 |
| | ITCE-00 | SRPP-00 | EB-00 | EXME-00 | E-00 | UTED-00 | VC-00 |
| | FRB-00 | H-01 | TEDE-00 | INR-00 | ITC-01 | L-00 | AC-01 |
| | NSAE-00 | NSCE-00 | OES-01 | OMB-01 | OPIC-01 | PC-01 | PM-00 |
| | ACE-00 | SP-00 | SSO-00 | SS-00 | STR-00 | TEST-00 | TRSE-00 |
| | USIE-00 | SNIS-00 | NISC-00 | PMB-00 | DRL-02 | G-00 | SAS-00 |
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R 100805Z JAN 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1583
USDA FAS WASHDC 1960
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 ROME 000134

SIPDIS

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CONCERNS.

SMALL PRODUCERS COULD COME UP WITH SMALL SUPPLIES OF NON-GMO SEEDS, BUT THAT NONE OF THE MAJOR SEED COMPANIES CAN DO SO IN QUANTITIES WHICH ARE SUFFICIENT FOR PLANTING ITALY'S CUSTOMARY 1.3 MILLION HECTARES OF CORN.

15. CONFAGRICOLTURA ALSO INDICATED THAT IF ALEMANNI IMPLEMENTS A TOLERANCE OF ADVENTITIOUS PRESENCE IT WOULD LIKELY ENTAIL A 0.3 PERCENT TOLERANCE FOR CORN SEED AND A 0.5 PERCENT TOLERANCE FOR SOYBEAN SEED. CONFAGRICOLTURA UNDERSTANDS THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MENTION OF SPECIFIC EVENTS (APPROVED VS. UNAPPROVED). CORN SEED SUPPLIES ARE OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO CONFAGRICOLTURA. SOYBEAN SEEDS ARE OF LESSER CONCERN GIVEN SOYBEAN PLANTINGS IN ITALY NEXT SEASON ARE EXPECTED TO DECLINE TO LESS THAN 200,000 HECTARES BECAUSE OF LOWER PRICES.

CDA MEETING WITH PM DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR
CASTELLENETTA

16. THE CHARGE, IN A CALL ON PM DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR CASTELLENETTA, RAISED THE TALKING POINTS IN REFTEL (ROME 68). HE STRESSED AS WELL THAT WE ARE APPRECIATIVE OF THE INITIAL STEPS TAKEN BY THE PM'S OFFICE TO REOPEN
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DISCUSSION ON AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGIES
AND THE PM'S DIRECTION THAT PROFESSOR

LEONARDO SANTI SHOULD EXPLORE WITH US AN AGREEMENT ON BIOTECH COOPERATION SIMILAR TO THE ONE WE CONCLUDED LAST SUMMER ON CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH. THE CHARGE ALSO MENTIONED THAT WE HAD RECEIVED THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY'S REQUEST TO CONSIDER AN INFORMAL BILATERAL DISCUSSION OF GMOS IN NEW YORK AT THE END OF JANUARY.

17. CASTELLANETA, WHO WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ACHIEVING THE CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH ACCORD, KNEW ABOUT AND WAS POSITIVE TOWARD PROF. SANTI'S APPROACH TO THE EMBASSY. HE DID NOT SEEM TO BE AWARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY'S PROPOSAL BUT LIKED IT.

18. CHARGE CONTINUED THAT, DESPITE THESE POSITIVE SIGNS, THE USG IS PUZZLED AT AND CONCERNED ABOUT AG MINISTER ALEMANNO'S DECEMBER 28 DIRECTIVE. HANDING CASTELLANETA A COPY, THE CHARGE NOTED THAT OUR READING OF THE DECREE INDICATES THAT IT WOULD ERECT NEW BARRIERS TO GMOS. THIS WOULD NOT BE IN KEEPING WITH DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN PRESIDENT BUSH AND PM BERLUSCONI AND OTHER EXCHANGES WE HAVE HAD WITH MUCH OF THE GOI. CASTELLANETA SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS ALEMANNO WAS TRYING TO DEMONSTRATE THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO GET DOWN TO ZERO PERCENT GMO CONTENT IN SEEDS.

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CHARGE REPLIED THAT HE HOPED THAT WAS THE INTENT, BUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DECREE'S APPEARANCE AND OUR READING OF IT CONCERN US. CASTELLANETA ADMITTED THAT HE WAS NOT SURE BUT PROMISED TO LOOK INTO IT. (NOTE: LATER, A CASTELLANETA AIDE CALLED CHARGE TO SAY THAT HE ALREADY HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ALEMANNO'S OFFICE TO GET DETAILS. END NOTE.)
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